S. No.	Name of the Project	Pending since	Reasons of pendency
3.	Diverstion of 3.963 ha. of forest land for Jhadabandha MIP.	June, 1998	Under process with Regional Office, Bhubaneshwar.

Ban on Snake Catching

2620. SHRI R. MARGABANDU: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the snake catching is prohibited;

(b) if so, whether Government are aware that on account of this policy the growth of snakes and the increased death rate of snake stinging in rural areas is alarming for which no compensation is given by Government; and

(c) whether Government propose to lift the ban on snake catching?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) Yes, Sir. Snakes are placed in Scheduled I, Part II of Scheduled II and Schedule IV of the Wildilife (Protection) Act, 1972 and their hunting and catching are prohibited.

(b) No report regarding the rise in the population of snakes leading to increased deaths due to snake bites in rural areas, had been received.

(c) No. Sir.

Ban on Felling of Trees and Timber in North-Eastern States

2621. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the continued ban on felling of trees and timber in seven North Eastern States has hit the plywood and veneer production in this area;

(b) whether it has cost the country big loss in foreign exchange earnings.

(c) if so, the estimated foreign exchange amount country has lost during the last one year;

(d) whether large number of workers have been rendered jobless due to this; and

(e) what action is proposed to be taken to remedy the situation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FOREST (SHRI BABULAL MARANDI): (a) Hon'ble Supreme Court vide order dated 12.12.1996 banned the felling of trees in all forests without having a working plan approved by Government of India as well as in the ecologically sensitive tropical rain forests of Tirap and Changlang Districts of Arunachal Pradesh. The Court vide order dated 15.1.1998 further directed all North Eastern States to prepare the working plans/working schemes and obtain the approval of Government of India within a period of two years and in the interregnum felling is allowed as per the annual ceiling fixed by Ministry of Environment and Forests. The Court banned the transportation of timber and timber products vide order dated 12.12.1996 from all North-Eastern States to rest of the country. However, the ban has been lifted vide order dated 15.1.1998 and transportation is allowed as per the directions contained in the said order.

(b) and (c) It is difficult to quantify the increase in import of timber etc. vis-a-vis loss of foreign exchange due to regulation of felling of trees and transportation of timber by the Court as

import of timber inter-alia depends on many factors viz. domestic and international market price, fluctuation in international currency and policies of various countries etc.

(d) and (e) Supreme Copurt has also directed that notwithstanding the closure of any saw mills or other wood-based industries pursuant to the order, the workers employed in such units will continue to be paid emoluments due and shall not be retrenched or removed from the service.

USE of Recycled Plastic Carry Bags

2622. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether use of recycled plastic carry bags to pack food is being banned;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the penalty proposed for its use?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABULAL MARANDI): (a) and (b) A proposal to prohibit the use of recycled plastic carry bags for packing or carrying foodstuffs and other related materials is under consideration of the Government. As per the statutory requirement, 60 days' time is to be given for interested parties to file their comments and objections. Taking the same into account, the final notification may be considered for publication.

(c) The proposed notification is to be issued under Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 and the penalty provision of the same Act will apply.

Effects of Plastic Products on Health and Environment

2623. SHRI K.R. MALKANI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that plastic products are bio-non-degradable and, therefore, a menace to health and environment; and

(b) whether Government would consider a ban on the production and sale of all plastic products?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABULAL MARANDI): (a) Yes, Sir. Plastic products are non-biodegradable and, therefore, their improper disposal causes health and environmental problems.

(b) At present, there is no such proposal under the consideration of the Government.

Packing of edible material in Polythene Bags

2624. DR. D. VENKATESHWAR RAO: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to ban polythene bags for packing of edible materials like samosas, jalebis etc;

(b) if so, the steps taken to acquaint rural people about the dangers of such polybags; and

(c) by when it is likely to be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABULAL MARANDI): (a) to (c) A proposal to prohibit the use of recycled plastic carry bags for packing or carrying foodstuffs and other related materials is under consideration of the Government. As per the statutory requirement, 60 days' time is to be given for interested parties to file their comments and objections. Taking the same into account, the issue of final notification will be considered. Steps to create general awareness about the dangers in using such plastic carry bags are being carried out through various awareness campaigns.